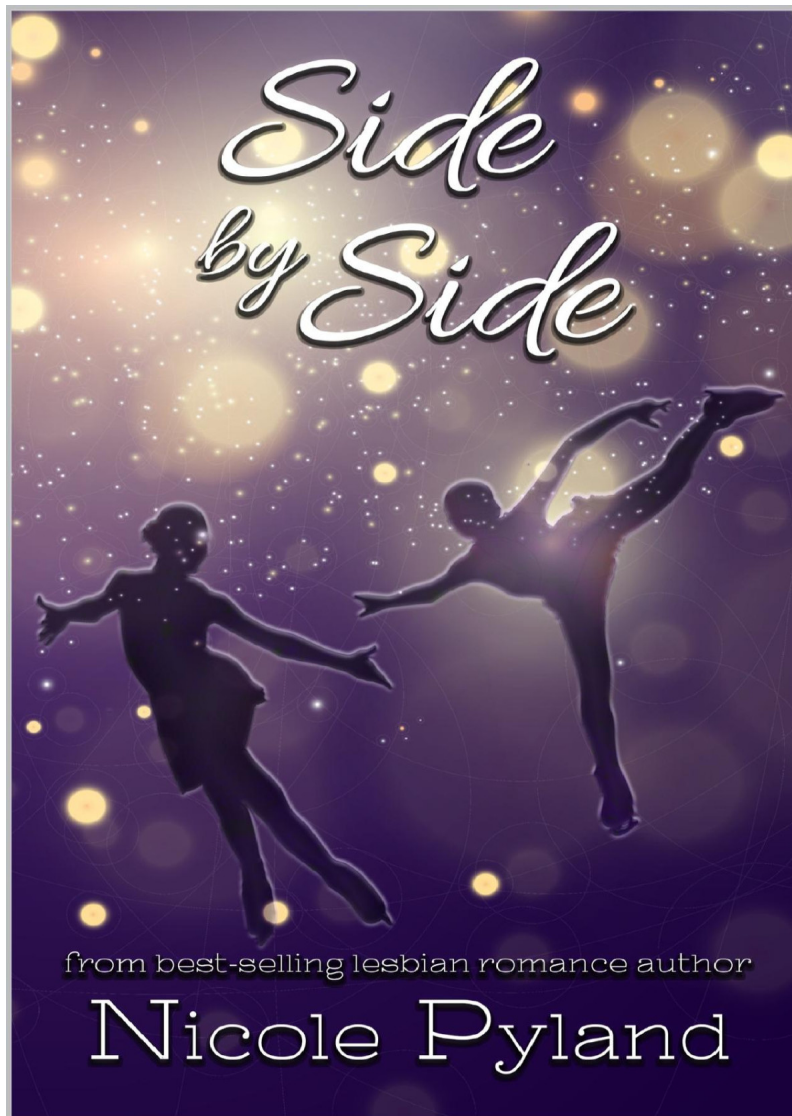


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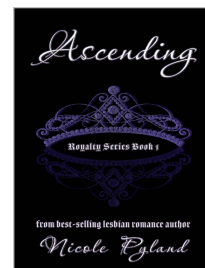


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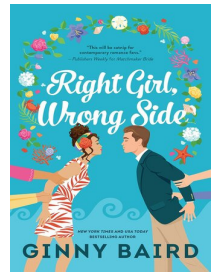
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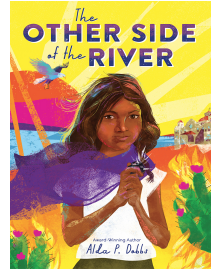
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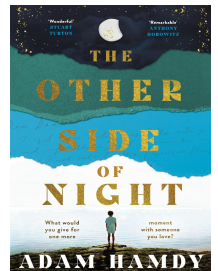
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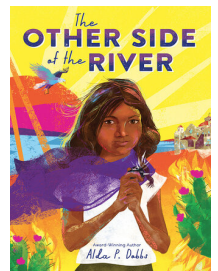
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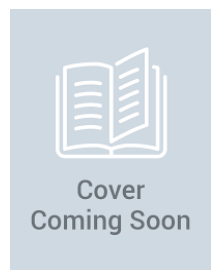
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# *Side by Side*



from best-selling lesbian romance author

# Nicole Pyland

# SIDE BY SIDE

Sports Series Book #6

Nicole Pyland

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# SIDE BY SIDE

## *Sports Series Book #6*

As teenagers, Belle Elrod and Chandler Wolfe had been chosen to be part of Team USA figure skating's elite training program. But when something happened, and Belle left the program, they were both left wondering what might have been.

Now a professional skater trying to make the Olympic Team for the first time, Chandler is looking for a new partner, while Belle hasn't skated competitively in over a decade.

The two are thrust back together unexpectedly when Team USA allows same-sex pairs to skate in the domestic competitions, and after convincing Belle to give her another chance, Chandler begins to believe she might have a chance to make the team.

A bossy coach of a sister wants to get in the way, but Chandler is determined not to lose Belle again, and not just as a skating partner.

Will the two of them crash out of the competition or will they show the country and each other what they're capable of?

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To contact the author or for any additional information,  
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# CHAPTER 1

Belle's favorite part of early morning skating alone on the ice was the feeling that always washed over her, knowing that it was a new day. There was the smell of coffee coming from the concession stand because she was usually the first in every morning and always started the big machine up herself. She didn't drink the coffee then, though. She got it started, turned on everything else that needed to be turned on, and checked on the stuff in the fridge and freezers to make sure they had enough to get them through until their next delivery. If there *were* any deliveries, she brought those in and put everything away first, but then Belle got to skate.

Every morning, she put on her skates and couldn't wait to get on the ice. Still, after all these years, she got such a rush out of gliding around as if she were floating. Her alone time on the ice every day had been part of her ritual since her dad had bought the rink years ago now, and still, every day, Belle thought about what had led them to this small town and her father to buy this place when it had been falling apart and not worth much at all. It was *now*, though, and that was all because of their hard work and the community that had embraced this building as part of their town. Belle loved this place and thought of it more as a home than the apartment she had not far from here, where her stuff *rested* more than anything else. The ice had always been her home, so as she moved backward across it, gaining speed and working up to a jump, she tried to push the thoughts of the past out of her mind.

She landed her jump and smiled as she came out of it, moving forward on the ice now, just as she'd done a long time ago in competitions. A smile on the face was key in getting the judges to award you decent points, even if your jump wasn't solid. She'd learned that from her first coach when she was just three years old.

"You always smile. Ladies always smile when they're on the ice," she'd said, and Belle had smiled up at her with her baby teeth and cheesy grin.

Her mom had put her in lessons more so that Belle would have something to do than anything else. She had ballet as well, but her mom had told her later that she was too restless for ballet. She'd wanted to really dance, and jump, and twirl, so while her mom still kept her in ballet classes for years, those were more to support her figure skating, and Belle had only gone once a week when all the other kids in ballet had started going every day if they were serious about it.

She'd had so much energy as a little kid that her parents had tried everything, really. She'd played soccer and ran the whole field back and forth for the entire game and somehow still had energy left over at the end of the game. They'd also put her in cheerleading for the Pee Wee boys' football league, but she'd hated that, so that hadn't lasted long. They'd gotten her piano lessons from a nice old woman who offered them for free to the neighborhood kids because she was lonely, and it was something for her to do. Belle hadn't particularly liked the piano, and soccer was just running to her.

From the moment she'd first stepped foot on the ice, though, that was where she wanted to be. Whenever she *wasn't* on the ice, it felt like she was missing something. That was why the thoughts of what had happened, what had been, and what *could* have been still hit her every morning when she came out for some alone time on the ice. Even though she tried to stop it, she'd picture it all over again.

She'd been moving her way up through juniors and into seniors, making her mark as a figure skater. Belle had been selected for a program that fed directly into US Figure Skating, and she had a real shot at making an Olympic Team. Her parents had moved her there, and she'd begun tutoring instead of going to regular school as part of the program in order to maximize her training time. Everything had been going well until Belle had realized something.

Belle ran into the side wall, gripping it with her hands and catching her breath. She hadn't been ready to make her next jump, so she'd used the wall to stop herself and now breathed hard as she gripped it and tried, yet again, to fruitlessly just be okay with where she was now and not think about what she might have had. It was like a song she couldn't get out of her head. When Belle backed up on her skates slowly and made her way to the middle of the completely empty rink, she looked around and decided to embrace it. If she went through it in her mind again – if she just listened to the song once – she'd be able to move on. So, if she replayed the moment that had changed everything for her, she could refocus.

Belle had been fourteen years old and at the program, and she'd had a crush. Well, not just a crush. She'd been in that silly kind of first-crush-that-felt-like-love phase with another skater, and that skater wasn't a boy. She hadn't told anyone at first because she knew it had been wrong; she couldn't like another girl how girls liked boys. So, she'd pretended for a while. But after a long practice, she'd found her crush taking off her skates and tossing them onto the floor.

*"What's wrong?" Belle had asked and had sat down on the hard wooden bench next to her, leaving some distance between them to be safe.*

*"I suck," her crush had replied. "I can't do this. God, I'm supposed to make an Olympic Team? I can't even land a jump."*

*"It was just a bad practice," Belle had reminded.*

*"I can't have a bad practice. I have to have perfect practices. I'm fourteen years old."*

*"So?" Belle had asked.*

*"This is supposed to be my cycle. I'm supposed to go to the Games. I'm supposed to be selected. But I just got in trouble because I couldn't land shit today," the girl had argued. "What is wrong with me?"*

*"Nothing," Belle had said softly. "You had a bad day, but nothing's wrong with you. You're the best skater out there."*

*Her crush had looked up at Belle then, and there had been something in her eyes that Belle had clearly read wrong. She knew that now, but she hadn't known it then.*

*"You're really nice, Belle," she'd said.*

*"Thanks," Belle had replied.*

*"We're competing for the same spot; you know that, right? You should want me to be bad."*

*"I don't," Belle had said. "I want you to be good. If it's not me out there, I... I'd want it to be you."*

*"Why?" She'd turned to Belle, dropping one leg on the other side of the bench, straddling it.*

*"I... don't know. You're nice, too," she'd said.*

*"Me? I'm a bitch," her crush had replied.*

*Belle had laughed a little and said, "You work hard. You want to be the best. I get it. I'm here for the same reason."*

*"You've been here for longer than I have."*

*"Since I was ten," she'd replied. "I don't know how much longer I'll be here, though."*

*"What? Why?"*

*"It's expensive. And we get help through the scholarship program, but it's still expensive. I keep hearing my parents talk about money at home, so... I don't know. I might only have one shot at this."*

*"Olympics?"*

*"Yeah," Belle had said. "But if it's not me, I do hope it'll be you. You've been... nice to me, at least."*

*"I have?" She'd smiled at Belle.*

*Belle had turned on the bench to face her and said, "Yeah. You brought me hot chocolate at that competition, even though we weren't supposed to have it."*

*Her crush had laughed, and Belle had felt butterflies at the sound of it.*

*"You said you liked it but didn't have it because of the sugar. I thought we could split one and it wouldn't be that bad."*

*"It was nice," Belle had said.*

*"Yeah, it was," she'd replied with a smile. "You're really good, you know? You're the best one here."*

*"No, I'm not." Belle had laughed.*

*Her crush had moved forward on the bench, getting closer to Belle.*

*"Yes, you are. You're years ahead of everyone else. The way you move out there – it's like you were meant to be on the ice."*

*"It feels that way sometimes," Belle had said.*

*"I love it so much," her crush had replied. "But I don't know what I'll do if I can't medal in the Games. My mom... She... And then, there's my sister. I just..." She'd looked away.*

*For whatever reason, Belle had reached for her then. She'd cupped her cheek, leaned in, and kissed her just above where her hand had ended up. Then, she'd quickly pulled away with wide eyes and swallowed. Her crush had looked just as scared as Belle probably had for a moment, but then she'd leaned in, and she'd kissed Belle on the lips. It had been so quick, Belle had almost missed it when her crush had leaned forward just an inch, and their lips had connected.*

*"What the—"*

*Belle had pulled back. Three skaters from the program had just walked into the room and had witnessed them kissing.*

*"Were you two just kissing?" One of them had laughed. "Whoa!"*

*"Gross," another one had said.*

*"Um..." Belle had started.*

*"She just kissed me." Her crush had shot up off the bench and practically run over to the other girls. "Gross, right? I don't even know why she did it."*

*"She's one of those, probably," the first girl had said.*

*Belle's heart had raced, and she hadn't known what to do, so she'd gotten up and she'd run while four girls behind her laughed, and she no longer had felt the butterflies at hearing that sound.*

*"Belle?" her dad yelled.*

*"Hey, Dad!" she yelled back and skated over toward him.*

*"Your practice is in twenty minutes. You need to change your skates," he said. "And, you know, into your gear." He pointed. "Can't play hockey in that." He pointed to her long-sleeved T-shirt and leggings.*

*"It's in twenty? No way." She looked up at the clock below the scoreboard. "Damn. I lost track of time."*

*"Don't you always? Go get yourself a cup of coffee before the guys get here," he said of her hockey team. "When you're done, let's go over the upcoming events. I want to make sure everything is looking good for the season."*

“Yeah, okay,” Belle replied.

She went into the women’s locker room and opened the locker that was always her locker. Her name was there on a strip of tape, but no one would ever remove it since she was the owner’s daughter. She changed into her hockey stuff and made her way back out just as the guys on her intramural team were starting to hit the ice.

She hadn’t planned on switching to hockey, but after leaving the program and her shot at making the US Olympic Team, she’d not wanted to leave the ice completely, so when her dad had bought this place and started bringing in teams and events, she’d joined a team of all guys who didn’t give her a hard time about being a woman, and they put her in goal. It hadn’t been her first choice of position, but it turned out that putting her there was a smart move. She had to remain focused on that puck and the quick movement of all the players at all times, and it actually calmed her brain. Then, whenever a shot came in, she could harness all that extra energy she’d always had into making a stop, which she loved.

“Hey, Belle,” Teddy, their team captain, said as she skated over to him.

“Hey. What’s up?”

“Nothing much.”

“How’s the baby?” she asked.

“Still not sleeping through the night. It’s a miracle that my wife and I can move at all, so if I play like shit until she starts sleeping for more than two hours at a time, you know why.”

“Yeah? You’re actually helping your wife? Or are you making her take care of everything like you do on the ice when you make me clean up your messes?” she teased.

Teddy laughed and said, “You’ve met my wife. What do you think?”

“She’s got you on a short leash, huh?”

“Yup. But I love it. God, I love being a dad, too. I hate the no sleep part, but it’s like, I don’t even mind changing her dirty diapers because she smiles up at me or makes those little baby sounds. She’s got me wrapped around her little finger.”

“Good. That’s how it should be.” Belle patted him on the shoulder. “Ready?”

“Let’s try not to embarrass ourselves too much.”

“Speak for yourself.” She laughed and skated off toward the net someone had just put out for their practice.

Later that night, Belle iced her knee, which had gotten hit a little too hard for a simple practice, as she lay in bed with her laptop next to her. She snapped into her dad’s homemade beef jerky that she’d stolen from the concession stand and brought up the website. The competition wasn’t on TV, but it was streaming, so she brought the video up fullscreen just in time to see Chandler Wolfe and her partner fall on the ice. Belle didn’t mean to, but she laughed because Chandler had really hit it. Her ass had smacked into the ice as her partner, a guy named Walker Wilcox, of all things, twisted and fell down himself. He must have dropped her, and Belle had just missed it. Either way, she snapped into the jerky again and chewed as she settled back against her pillow and watched Chandler get up, give the crowd a fake smile, reach for her partner, who took her hand, and they began to damage-control the remainder of their routine. When they finished, both of them moved to sit, and the camera stayed on them as their scores were revealed.

“Karma’s a bitch, huh?”

Belle stared into Chandler’s blue eyes with their glittery eye shadow covering them and too much mascara, making her fake eyelashes look even more fake, and she thought back to that fourteen-year-old girl who had smiled at Belle before she had kissed her. Belle closed the computer then, not wanting to watch the competition anymore, and stared up at her ceiling as she thought back to how one kiss had led to her whole life changing.

# CHAPTER 2

“What the hell was that?” Catalina asked.

“What was *what*, Catalina?”

“Don’t Catalina me like that. You know I hate it.”

“It’s not my fault Dad knocked Mom up with you on Catalina Island,” she teased her older sister.

Chandler then packed her skates in her bag before she looked up and around the room for her partner.

“Where’s Walker?” she asked.

“Getting checked out, like I told you.”

“Still?”

“Chandler, we might really have a problem here. His ankle started swelling right away. I don’t know how he skated at all after that fall.”

“He laces his skates up so tightly, his foot could detach from his leg, and he could still skate,” she joked.

“This isn’t funny.” Catalina sat down next to her on the bench. “If he’s fine, we’re still looking at you two not being selected because you shit the bed tonight.”

“Mom would’ve killed you if she heard you use that expression,” Chandler replied.

“You would already be the oldest person to skate in the Olympics for the US. You know that. I don’t have to tell you that. You’re twenty-six, Chandler – it’s now or never. Walker is your ticket to these Games. He’s the golden boy of US Figure Skating. And when he switched to pairs, you finally got your chance. If they pick you two, it’s only really because of him being figure skating royalty.”

“Gee, thanks, sis. I’m figure skating royalty, too, you know?”

“Not how he is. He has a medal already. His mom, the former gold medalist, is on the committee. His older sister *and* older brother are both medalists. He’s a legacy, and he’s your ticket in.”

“I could find someone else if I had to,” she suggested.

“Not like Walker Wilcox. I’m not telling you this as your sister; I’m telling you this as your coach, Chandler. You better hope he’s okay, because if not, I just don’t see how you can find a new partner, train together long enough, and do something to wow the committee and get into the Games. You’d need a new partner *and* a prayer.”

“I could skate solo.”

“You switched to pairs for a reason.”

“Yes, but I started out not doing that.”

“And that didn’t really work for you, did it?”

“No, it didn’t.” Chandler looked down at the floor.

“Okay; I’ve got some bad news...”

Chandler looked back up to see the trainer standing in front of them.

“What is it? How bad?” Catalina asked.

“It’s probably a partial tear. We still need to get an MRI to confirm, so we’ll do that, but for right now, I can already tell you that he won’t be able to skate for the next several weeks, at minimum. I’ve got him on crutches back there now, and we’re likely looking at a partial Achilles tear. He’s able to walk on it, which means it’s not a total tear, but I don’t think he’s going to be doing much skating, conservatively, for at least six to eight weeks.”

“Shit,” Catalina said, stood, and ran her hand over the back of her neck.

“It could be worse. I don’t know. We need further tests.”

“PT?” Catalina asked.

“Not anytime soon. I don’t know if he needs surgery yet, but if he does, that means more recovery time. We need to get him to the hospital and have it fully checked out to know more, so we’re going to take him there now.”

“Can I see him first?” Chandler asked, standing up and grabbing her bag off the bench.

“Sure. But make it fast.”

“You stay here,” she said to her sister. “You’ll only make him feel bad about getting hurt.”

“I wouldn’t do that.”

“Not on purpose, maybe. Stay here. I’ll be right back. Then, we can go.”

Chandler followed the trainer into the medical room and saw Walker lying on a blue cushioned bed. His eyes were closed. He looked like he’d been crying, and she didn’t know if it was in pain or because it was likely that he wasn’t going to skate in the Olympics this cycle.

“Hey,” she greeted when she got to his bed and took his hand, giving it a little squeeze.

“I am so sorry,” he said.

“For what?”

“I dropped you. My hand slipped, and now, we’re done.” He looked down at his foot. “I can’t believe that. I haven’t dropped you in training with that move... ever. Are *you* okay?”

“I’m fine. My butt’s a little sore, but I’m okay.” She gave him a little smile. “And it happens. I’m not mad at you. I want you to get better.”

“I can’t skate, Chandler. I can tell it’s bad.”

“We’ll figure something out. Let’s just get the tests you need to know what’s really going on in there, and we’ll see.”

“You need to find another partner,” he said.

“Walker, you heal pretty fast. You told me that once. Let’s see what the doctors say after they get a good look at everything.”

“No, you need to do it. Everyone good is going to be taken already if you don’t. I want you to find someone else. You shouldn’t lose your chance because of me.”

“Who would I even get? You’re the best.” She widened her smile for his benefit.

Chandler tried not to think about the countless hours upon hours of training and workouts they’d put in together to try to make the Olympic Team. She tried not to think about the sacrifices she’d made in her life to get here time and time again, only to not be able to go represent her country in her sport, which had always been her dream. She tried not to think about all the delicious, fatty, sweet food she didn’t eat, the love life she didn’t have, the friends she’d lost along the way, and everything else that it would seem she’d all done for nothing.

“I’m not the best. After I get all the tests and stuff, I can try to make some calls for you, if you want. There are a few guys that I know who could use partners. They might not be right for you, but they could be. You could maybe mold them or something.”

“Are they not right for me because they’re, like, seventeen years old?”

Walker laughed and replied, “A couple of them are eighteen, but they don’t look eighteen.”

Chandler sighed and said, “I know I’m basically a senior citizen here, but, Walker, you’re the only twenty-two-year-old guy in this cycle who looks older than he is, so we match well together on the ice. If I go out there with someone who still has teen acne on his face, it’ll look weird. I’ll be like a mom with her son out there when we’re supposed to look nothing like mother and son.”

“Chandler, we should get him to the hospital,” the trainer interjected.

She’d forgotten that he was even there.

“I’ll help you find someone, okay?”

“Walker, just worry about getting better. I have Cat to help me find another partner. We’ll be okay. I don’t want you to worry about me. You still have a chance at another Games, if you aren’t able to skate in this one.”

“I’ve already skated at one. Don’t get me wrong – I want to go back and repeat. But I want you to go, too.”

“I’ll be okay.” She squeezed his hand again. “Now, get checked out. Do you want me to come with you?”

“No, my mom is here. She’ll come with me.”

“Okay. Will you text me when you know more?”

“It’ll be late.”

“That’s okay. I’ll be up,” she said.

She left Walker in the care of the people who would take him to the hospital and walked back out, where she saw Catalina standing by the doors, staring down at her phone.

“How is he?” she asked without looking up.

“Not great. I think it’s safe to say he’s done for the season, at least. He told me to find a new partner.”

“Good. We need to get on that. And I’m glad that he told you it was okay so you’d feel better about it.”

“Cat, he’s really hurt right now, and he’s not going to skate in the Games. So, can we maybe wait until tomorrow morning to find a replacement?”

“No, I’m looking up names right now. It’s pretty bleak. There are only a handful of male skaters like Walker in the country, and all of them are partnered up. You’re going to have to go younger. Come on.” Catalina motioned for Chandler to follow her out the doors toward the car that would be waiting to take them to their hotel.

Their parents never really came to see Chandler skate. They contributed to her career financially more than in any other way, and her dad made sure they had a car service on hand at all times to get to and from wherever they needed to go. Chandler slid in after her sister, told the driver to take them to their hotel, and Catalina still hadn’t even looked up from her phone.

“Okay. There’s a sixteen-year-old. He looks at least nineteen, though. Strong. He’s in Milwaukee. We could go check him out in person before the next competition.”

Catalina was rambling now. Chandler recognized it, so she tuned her out, knowing that her sister wouldn’t stop for a while. She let her head hit the glass of the window and looked at the snow-covered road as they drove the short distance to the hotel.



“He’s twenty but looks like he’s still in his diapers,” Catalina said of another skater when the car pulled up to the lobby. “He’s only ever skated solo. Maybe we can get him into pairs. He’s in Salt Lake. We could call and see about a visit. Chandler?”

“What?” she asked as the door was opened by the driver.

“We need to go to Salt Lake City to see this guy.”

“Not right now, Cat,” she replied and got out of the car.

“What do you mean, not right now? You don’t have any time to spare. You need a new partner.”

“Right now, I need a hot bath. Then, I’m putting ice on my ass because I hit it hard, and you haven’t even asked me once if I’m okay after getting dropped out there, or how I’m feeling about Walker getting hurt and maybe losing my chance to finally make the team I’ve been trying to get on my entire life.”

Catalina joined her at the sliding glass doors to the hotel lobby and said, “I told you I’m being your coach right now, not your sister.”

“Well, be my sister right now, then. I can’t think about flying to Salt Lake or Minnesota.”

“It was Milwaukee, not Minnesota.”

“Wherever. I can’t think about going there or anywhere else right now. Tomorrow? Maybe. But not tonight. I need food, ice, and sleep.”

“Fine. I’ll have something sent up to your room. But I have to keep searching. Call it coach mode, if you want, but it’s my job.”

“That Mom and Dad pay you for. It’s not like you’re going to get fired.” Chandler walked through the doors.

“Hey, why are you being such a bitch right now?” Cat followed her inside.

“Because tonight was one of my last chances to show up and maybe get a shot. Instead, Walker, who never drops me even in training, dropped me on my ass, and I looked ridiculous out there. He’s the best pairs skater in the US – maybe in the whole world right now – and even *he* can’t help me get to the Olympics. So, I need to drown my sorrows in a bubble bath and a glass of wine and think about what I’m doing here, Cat.”

“What are you talking about?”

“I’m twenty-six. I’m older than everyone else here, and it still hasn’t happened for me. Maybe it’s not meant to, and I just need to realize that. Can I take the elevator up alone?” she asked as she pressed the button. “You can do whatever you need to do tonight, but I need to not be around anyone right now.”

“Fine. Yeah,” Catalina replied just as the elevator arrived.

Chandler got inside, pressed the button for the fifth floor of the very nice hotel that her parents also paid for, and after the elevator arrived at its destination, she walked down the hallway to her room. Once inside, she breathed a sigh of relief and immediately found the room service menu next to the phone. Wishing she could order three desserts as her dinner instead, she went for the grilled chicken with a vegetable medley, a bottle of sparkling water, and a red wine she’d never tried before.

They told her it would be about forty-five minutes, so she started a bath, adding her favorite bubble bath that she brought everywhere with her to remind her of home, and waited for the water to fill up enough to get in. Her phone buzzed, and she expected it to be Catalina telling her that she’d already found her a new partner, because it would be too soon for Walker to know anything about his ankle. It wasn’t, though. It was a notification from her news app that was one of her favorite things because it allowed her to tailor the kind of news she wanted to read, so she’d been able to select news about sports and the Olympics, specifically. Chandler sat on the end of the bed and read the article the notification had told her about because it had caught her eye.

*After Skate Canada began allowing same-gender pairings for both pairs skating and pairs ice dancing, US Figure Skating has decided to follow suit and will allow same-gender pairs to skate and perform together in all competitions moving forward. While same-gender pairing is still not a recognized event by the International Olympic Committee, it is something that US Figure Skating will allow at all future events in the junior and senior levels of competition, including nationals. It is possible that in the coming years, the Olympics will also begin to allow same-gender pairing for figure skating.*

Chandler looked up from her phone for a moment before glancing back down to finish the article, which mentioned that they’d be accepting same-gender pairs in all events beginning with the next major one moving forward, and she had an idea. It was a ridiculous idea, but it was still an idea. Her sister would hate it. Her parents might not want to pay for it, but maybe, just maybe, something like this could help get her noticed in a different way. She’d heard rumblings about them heading this direction ever since Canada had started to allow it, but she hadn’t been sure the US would ever allow same-gender pairs to compete at any level. Now, it was happening, and as Chandler slipped into the tub beneath the lavender-scented bubbles, she thought more about the idea.

“What if I don’t look for a male partner but a female one?”

# CHAPTER 3

“Okay. What can I get you?” Belle asked the little girl.

“Can I have some popcorn?”

“Sure, you can. I’ll grab it for you. Anything else?” she asked the girl’s mom, who was standing behind her.

“No, just that for the drive home. Better than something sugary before bed, right?”

“I can imagine, yeah,” she replied and walked back to the popcorn machine. She scooped some into the red-and-white striped container, walked back to the counter, and handed it to the little girl. “There you go.”

The girl’s mom handed Belle some cash and asked, “What do you say?”

“Thank you,” the little girl said before she stuffed a handful of popcorn into her mouth.

“You’re welcome,” Belle replied with a little laugh. “You two have a good night.”

“Thank you,” the girl’s mom said before they walked away.

That was the last customer of the night for Belle, at least.

“Hey, I’m going to get in some ice time. Are you good back here?” she asked Steph, who worked the concession stand part-time and who was already cleaning the grill since they had enough hot dogs on the spinning rack to get through the rest of the night.

“Yeah, I’m good.”

“Okay. I’ll be back to help you close up.”

“No problem,” Steph said.

Belle went out through the back door that led to a hallway and the behind-the-scenes operations for the Ice Park, which was the not-so-clever name her dad had given the place when he’d bought it. She got to the locker room, changed into her skating clothes, and carried her bag with her skates in it out to the ice, where she found her dad trying to tighten a bolt on some old, rickety metal bleachers.

“Hey, honey,” he said and grunted.

“Hey. Need help?”

“No, I’ve almost got it. We need to get new bleachers so that I don’t have to keep fixing these.”

“I’m surprised they let you run a competition here this weekend, with this one set of bleachers requiring you to replace a bolt, but instead of doing that, you just keep twisting it back in.”

Her dad finished what he was doing, looked up, and gave her a glare.

“It’s a perfectly good bolt.”

“No, it’s not, which is why you have to tighten it once a week.”

“Well,” he said as if that would explain anything. Then, he wiped his brow, looked around, and added, “This place isn’t so bad.”

“No, it’s not, Dad. It’s great, actually.”

“So great, they’re letting us host that big competition you just mocked me for a second ago.”

“Don’t get carried away. It’s not US Nationals; it’s a regional figure skating competition.”

“With some real talent. You should be skating out there with them.”

“I haven’t done any serious figure skating in about a decade now, so I don’t think I belong out there with the professionals.”

Her dad sat down on the very bleacher he’d just repaired and asked, “Is it going to bother you, them all being here?”

“No. We need the business. Little kids figure skating with their parents helps, but you make real money on the hockey games and events.”

“Hockey games that my kid plays in,” he added. “There is women’s hockey. You know that, right?”

Belle chuckled as she sat down next to him. They’d had this conversation so many times before, and it always went the same way.

“Dad, I haven’t gotten injured yet. I play in goal, so I’m not getting roughed up against the glass. The guys are nice, and there’s no women’s league around here. I’d have to travel two hours away to join one, and I can’t do that. I work here, and you know I need my time on the ice for just me.”

“I know. But those guys are huge...”

“They *are* not.” She laughed and patted him on the knee. “They’re normal-sized dudes who play recreational hockey and take it way too seriously before they go have a few beers and then go home to their wives.”

“And when will that be you?”

“Sorry?” she asked, not expecting that question.

“When will you have a wife that you can go home to?”

“Oh,” she said and laughed a little. “Um... It’s going to be a while, considering I’m here all the time, and this place tends to be occupied by figure skating and hockey moms who all have rings on their fingers, so...”

“Well, correct me if I’m wrong, but you told me that you wanted to be one of those moms one day, and you didn’t want to do that alone.”

“Dad, I’m only twenty-six.”

“I know that. But you’re close to twenty-seven, and *I’m* not getting any younger. I want to be a grandpa, Belle.”

“Well, you should’ve had a few more kids, then, because it’ll be a while for me. I’d like to meet a woman and, you know, date her a little before I consider having a kid with her.”

Her dad sighed and said, “Fine. I’ll be patient.”

“No, you won’t.” Belle laughed.

“You know your mom and I wanted more kids.”

“I know,” she replied and looked out at the ice, where just a few people were riding out the clock until they closed in a few minutes.

“She couldn’t...”

“Yeah.”

“Did I ever tell you that we thought about adopting?”

“No. You did?” she asked, looking over at him.

“You were about five or six, I think. We started talking about it then.”

“Why didn’t you?”

Her dad cleared his throat and said, “We just changed our minds.”

“How are you this bad of a liar?” she asked, laughing a little. “Dad...”

“Belle, you were all we needed. That’s all that mattered.”

“Dad, what—”

“Honey, your skating was expensive. All of your activities were. You never seemed to want to sleep. When you weren’t in school, we had to keep you busy. Ballet wasn’t cheap, but you only did that once a week, so that wasn’t bad. When you took to skating, we wanted to make sure you had what you needed. When you got into that program, that was great because they gave us some help, but it was still expensive. We just couldn’t afford that plus the adoption process, which is also expensive, so we decided to put everything we had into the daughter we had already and loved more than anything. It was well worth it when we got to see you out on that ice enjoying yourself and beating everyone.”

Belle looked at her father, who was staring out at the ice now. That was all new information to her. She’d had no idea that her parents had given up their chance at another child just so she could ice skate.

“And then, I quit?”

“You didn’t quit. Those girls forced you out.”

“No, I quit, Dad. I mean, they didn’t exactly make it easy for me to stay, but it was my choice to give it up.”

“Well, it was the right choice. I didn’t want you around girls like that anyway, making your life hell just because you liked girls; as if you could help that or change it. I couldn’t believe it when that coach came up to me and told me he’d given you a warning for being inappropriate with one of the girls. Like you’d ever be inappropriate.”

“Well, I did kiss her on the cheek.”

He turned to her and said, “Because she’d had a bad practice and was upset.”

“Well, yeah.” She nodded and looked out at the ice, watching the last pair of skaters walk off. “I also liked her, so there’s that.”

“She kissed you. That’s what you told me when you were crying after they mocked you incessantly.”

“She *did*. I mean, I *think* she did. That’s the way I remember it, at least. But it doesn’t matter anymore.”

“What ever happened to that teenage terror? What was her name?”

“Uh... Chandler. And she’s still skating, I think,” she said, knowing full well that Chandler was still skating because not all that long ago, she’d watched her land on her ass in a competition. “Probably engaged to some stockbroker or shady car salesman or something, too; something slimy. That’s what I’ve always pictured for her, anyway.”

He laughed and said, “Are you sure you’re going to be okay this week?”

“Dad, I left figure skating behind a long time ago.”

“No, you didn’t. Competing, maybe, but you haven’t left it.” He placed his large, calloused hand on her bag. “Those aren’t your hockey skates, honey.”

“No, they’re not,” she replied.

“So, go out on the ice and have some fun before you go home. I’ll leave the lights on for you.”

“You always do,” she said with a smile.

He walked off, and Belle began lacing up her skates. Then, she made her way onto the ice and let her skates take her around and around, just like most of the people who came here to skate did. She didn’t worry about jumps, spins, or picking up

speed. She just coasted and let the cold air hit her face as she planned the routine she'd do when she was ready; maybe the choreography from her last competition or something she'd worked on herself in the past few years.

"Belle?"

Belle turned her head to see Steph yelling and motioning over to her, so she turned and headed that way, meeting her at the wall.

"What's up?"

"We're closed, but there are two women here saying they paid for some extra practice time tonight. I guess they're in the competition that's here or something."

"Dad didn't tell me anything about it. Is it in the computer?"

"I checked, and it just says, 'Extra practice,' but no names or anything."

Belle shook her head and said, "He has got to get better at using that thing. They're fine. I don't want to get anyone angry before the event even starts. Can you show them to the locker room if they need it?"

"Sure," Steph replied and started to walk off. Then, she turned back. "Do I need to stay until they're gone?"

"No, I'll do that," Belle replied.

"Cool. Thanks," Steph said and walked toward the front of the building.

Belle figured that if whoever it was needed a few minutes to get changed, she could take those few minutes to use the ice herself, so she skated for speed this time, going around and around again until she was ready. She slowed a bit and went into the middle of the rink as she jumped and landed her favorite jump, the double Axel, which she'd worked on for months upon months before even landing correctly once.

"Excuse me?"

Belle turned her head and stopped when she saw a woman standing on the ice.

"I was told we've got the ice now."

The woman wasn't wearing any skates, so Belle figured that she must be the coach.

"Sorry. I work here. I was just getting in a little time before your time started."

"Well, it starts now. Is the ice even clean?"

"No, it's not," Belle said, skating over a little toward the woman. "To be honest, I didn't know you were going to be here this late. We usually close about now. Well, a few minutes ago."

"Yes, I know. That's why I booked it. I wanted solo time for my skater."

"Cat, chill. What's going on?"

Belle had heard that voice before. It sounded deeper, as the owner was older now, but there was no mistaking it because she'd been in love with that voice as a fourteen-year-old and hadn't heard it since she'd left the program. She'd watched many competitions on TV over the years, and she'd seen some here, in the Ice Park, but whenever Chandler had skated, Belle had always turned the TV off or closed her computer before anyone got a chance to put a microphone in front of her mouth and ask her interview questions like, "How did you feel coming out of that toe loop?"

Chandler, on her skates, came up behind the woman until she stood beside her and looked at Belle, who waited for the moment of recognition. It didn't come.

"So, what's going on? Do we not have the ice or something?" Chandler asked.

Her brown hair was pinned back into a tight ballet bun, just how it had been the last time Belle had seen her at the rink when she'd packed her things and had turned, hoping Chandler would say goodbye, but other girls had been there, so Chandler hadn't even looked at Belle. Her blue eyes were that kind of ice blue that people always described as cold, but Belle had always thought they just fit who Chandler was: a talented figure skater who loved ice almost as much as Belle did.

"Uh... No, you're good. It's your ice," she replied. "Sorry, we just closed and didn't have time to clean it for you."

"No problem. I'm just getting in a little practice time."

"You need clean ice," the woman Belle now knew as Cat remarked.

"Cat, it's fine. Just chill. God, take the stick out of your ass and just let me skate. It's late, and I want to go to the hotel and get some sleep at some point tonight, so can we get this practice session over with, please?"

"Fine," Cat said. "But I want a discount on the ice time."

"Sure. No problem," Belle replied before she skated to the door, which she closed behind her, walked over to the bleachers where she'd left her bag, and sat down to change out of her skates. "Fuck," she whispered.

She'd just let Steph go home. Her dad was probably in the back office, doing paperwork, but she didn't want to make him close up the front just because Chandler Wolfe had shown up unexpectedly.

It didn't make any sense. Chandler, of all people, had no reason to compete in some small, regional competition at a community ice rink. US Figure Skating wasn't even sponsoring the event. Chandler was paired with Walker Wilcox and was probably about to go to the Olympics.

"What is she even doing here?" Belle muttered to herself as she shoved her skates into her bag.

She wasn't going to sit around and look like a creep, so she grabbed her bag, walked it to the locker room, and shoved it

inside her locker before heading back to the concession stand to check that Steph had taken the money from the drawer and had brought it to the back to be counted. Then, Belle noticed that three hot dogs were still left on the spinning racks that weren't spinning anymore. Steph had probably turned it off but had forgotten to clean it, so that meant that while Chandler Wolfe was out on *her* ice, Belle would be cleaning hot dog juice from the machine and wondering how exactly she was going to handle this competition, given this new development.

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# Exploring the Variety of Random Documents with Different Content



**MOMBI POINTED HER LONG, BONY FINGER AT THE BOY.**

"You are not a girl just now," said she, gently, "because Mombi transformed you into a boy. But you were born a girl, and also a Princess; so you must resume your proper form, that you may become Queen of the Emerald City."

"Oh, let Jinjur be the Queen!" exclaimed Tip, ready to cry. "I want to stay a boy, and travel with the Scarecrow and the Tin Woodman, and the Woggle-Bug, and Jack—yes! and my friend the Saw-Horse—and the Gump! I don't want to be a girl!"

"Never mind, old chap," said the Tin Woodman, soothingly; "it don't hurt to be a girl, I'm told; and we will all remain your faithful friends

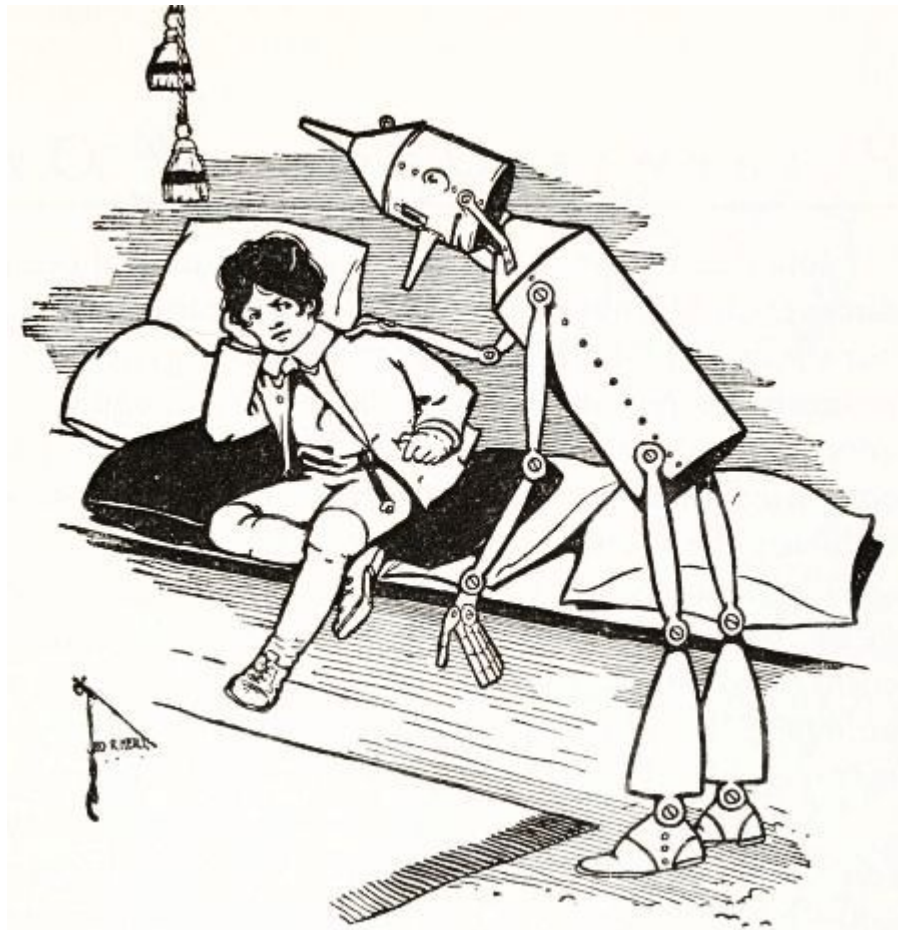
just the same. And, to be honest with you, I've always considered girls nicer than boys."

"They're just as nice, anyway," added the Scarecrow, patting Tip affectionately upon the head.

"And they are equally good students," proclaimed the Woggle-Bug. "I should like to become your tutor, when you are transformed into a girl again."

"But—see here!" said Jack Pumpkinhead, with a gasp: "if you become a girl, you can't be my dear father any more!"

"No," answered Tip, laughing in spite of his anxiety; "and I shall not be sorry to escape the relationship." Then he added, hesitatingly, as he turned to Glinda: "I might try it for awhile,—just to see how it seems, you know. But if I don't like being a girl you must promise to change me into a boy again."



"Really," said the Sorceress, "that is beyond my magic. I never deal in transformations, for they are not honest, and no respectable sorceress likes to make things appear to be what they are not. Only unscrupulous witches use the art, and therefore I must ask Mombi to effect your release from her charm, and restore you to your proper form. It will be the last opportunity she will have to practice magic."

Now that the truth about Princess Ozma had been discovered, Mombi did not care what became of Tip; but she feared Glinda's anger, and the boy generously promised to provide for Mombi in her old age if he became the ruler of the Emerald City. So the Witch consented to effect the transformation, and preparations for the event were at once made.

Glinda ordered her own royal couch to be placed in the center of the tent. It was piled high with cushions covered with rose-colored silk, and from a golden railing above hung many folds of pink gossamer, completely concealing the interior of the couch.

The first act of the Witch was to make the boy drink a potion which quickly sent him into a deep and dreamless sleep. Then the Tin Woodman and the Woggle-Bug bore him gently to the couch, placed him upon the soft cushions, and drew the gossamer hangings to shut him from all earthly view.

The Witch squatted upon the ground and kindled a tiny fire of dried herbs, which she drew from her bosom. When the blaze shot up and burned clearly old Mombi scattered a handful of magical powder over the fire, which straightway gave off a rich violet vapor, filling all the tent with its fragrance and forcing the Saw-Horse to sneeze—although he had been warned to keep quiet.





### **MOMBI AT HER MAGICAL INCANTATIONS.**

Then, while the others watched her curiously, the hag chanted a rhythmical verse in words which no one understood, and bent her lean body seven times back and forth over the fire. And now the incantation seemed complete, for the Witch stood upright and cried the one word "Yeowa!" in a loud voice.

The vapor floated away; the atmosphere became clear again; a whiff of fresh air filled the tent, and the pink curtains of the couch trembled slightly, as if stirred from within.

Glinda walked to the canopy and parted the silken hangings. Then she bent over the cushions, reached out her hand, and from the couch arose the form of a young girl, fresh and beautiful as a May

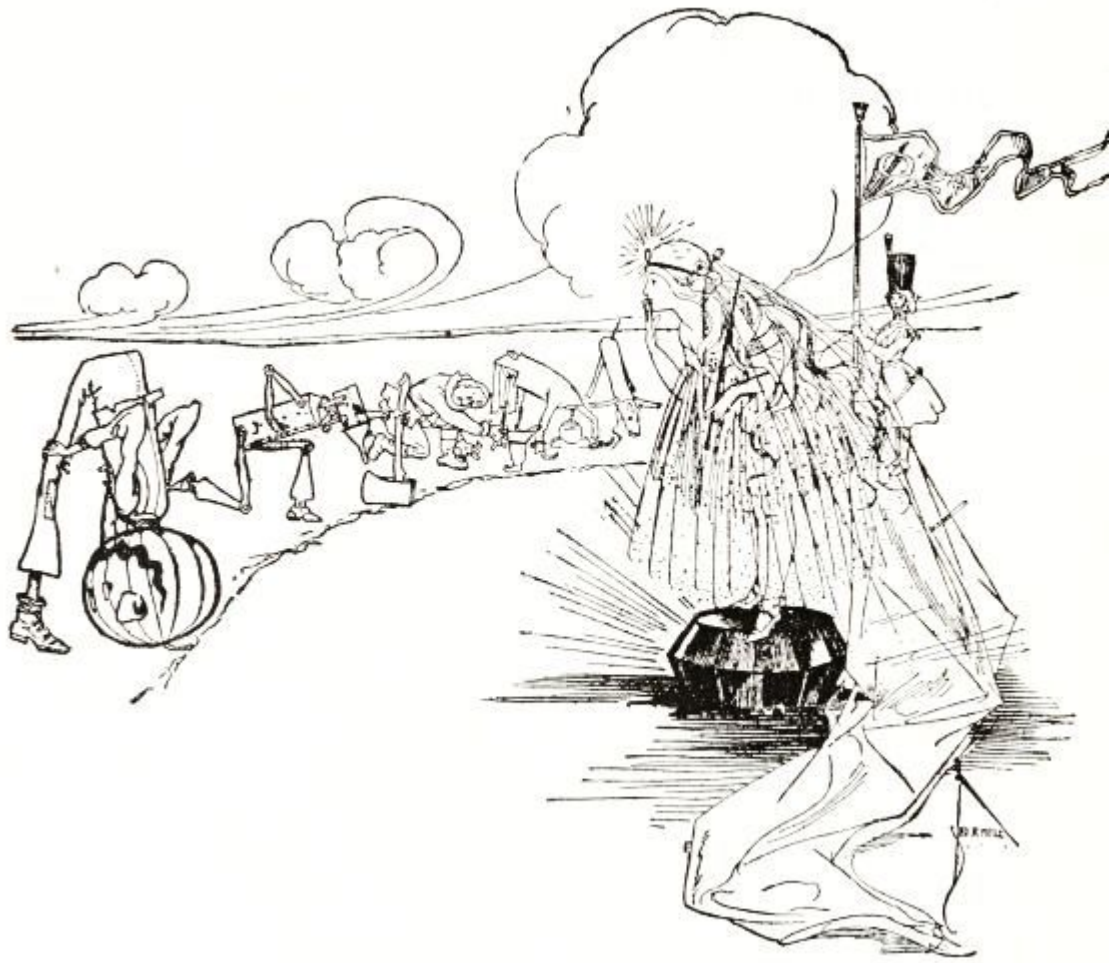
morning. Her eyes sparkled as two diamonds, and her lips were tinted like a tourmaline. All adown her back floated tresses of ruddy gold, with a slender jeweled circlet confining them at the brow. Her robes of silken gauze floated around her like a cloud, and dainty satin slippers shod her feet.

At this exquisite vision Tip's old comrades stared in wonder for the space of a full minute, and then every head bent low in honest admiration of the lovely Princess Ozma. The girl herself cast one look into Glinda's bright face, which glowed with pleasure and satisfaction, and then turned upon the others. Speaking the words with sweet diffidence, she said:

"I hope none of you will care less for me than you did before. I'm just the same Tip, you know; only—only—"

"Only you're different!" said the Pumpkinhead; and everyone thought it was the wisest speech he had ever made.







When the wonderful tidings reached the ears of Queen Jinjur—how Mombi the Witch had been captured; how she had confessed her crime to Glinda; and how the long-lost Princess Ozma had been discovered in no less a personage than the boy Tip—she wept real tears of grief and despair.

"To think," she moaned, "that after having ruled as Queen, and lived in a palace, I must go back to scrubbing floors and churning butter again! It is too horrible to think of! I will never consent!"

So when her soldiers, who spent most of their time making fudge in the palace kitchens, counseled Jinjur to resist, she listened to their foolish prattle and sent a sharp defiance to Glinda the Good and the Princess Ozma. The result was a declaration of war, and the very next day Glinda marched upon the Emerald City with pennants flying and bands playing, and a forest of shining spears sparkling brightly beneath the sun's rays.

But when it came to the walls this brave assembly made a sudden halt; for Jinjur had closed and barred every gateway, and the walls of the Emerald City were builded high and thick with many blocks of green marble. Finding her advance thus baffled, Glinda bent her



brows in deep thought, while the Woggle-Bug said, in his most positive tone:

"We must lay siege to the city, and starve it into submission. It is the only thing we can do."

"Not so," answered the Scarecrow. "We still have the Gump, and the Gump can still fly."

The Sorceress turned quickly at this speech, and her face now wore a bright smile.

"You are right," she exclaimed, "and certainly have reason to be proud of your brains. Let us go to the Gump at once!"

So they passed through the ranks of the army until they came to the place, near the Scarecrow's tent, where the Gump lay. Glinda and Princess Ozma mounted first, and sat upon the sofas. Then the Scarecrow and his friends climbed aboard, and still there was room for a Captain and three soldiers, which Glinda considered sufficient for a guard.



Now, at a word from the Princess, the queer Thing they had called the Gump flopped its palm-leaf wings and rose into the air, carrying the party of adventurers high above the walls. They hovered over the palace, and soon perceived Jinjur reclining in a hammock in the courtyard, where she was comfortably reading a novel with a green cover and eating green chocolates, confident that the walls would protect her from her enemies. Obeying a quick command, the Gump alighted safely in this very courtyard, and before Jinjur had time to do more than scream, the Captain and three soldiers leaped out and made the former Queen a prisoner, locking strong chains upon both her wrists.

That act really ended the war; for the Army of Revolt submitted as soon as they knew Jinjur to be a captive, and the Captain marched in safety through the streets and up to the gates of the city, which

she threw wide open. Then the bands played their most stirring music while Glinda's army marched into the city, and heralds proclaimed the conquest of the audacious Jinjur and the accession of the beautiful Princess Ozma to the throne of her royal ancestors.



At once the men of the Emerald City cast off their aprons. And it is said that the women were so tired eating of their husbands' cooking that they all hailed the conquest of Jinjur with joy. Certain it is that, rushing one and all to the kitchens of their houses, the good wives prepared so delicious a feast for the weary men that harmony was immediately restored in every family.

Ozma's first act was to oblige the Army of Revolt to return to her every emerald or other gem stolen from the public streets and buildings; and so great was the number of precious stones picked from their settings by these vain girls, that every one of the royal jewelers worked steadily for more than a month to replace them in their settings.

Meantime the Army of Revolt was disbanded and the girls sent home to their mothers. On promise of good behavior Jinjur was likewise released.

Ozma made the loveliest Queen the Emerald City had ever known; and, although she was so young and inexperienced, she ruled her people with wisdom and justice. For Glinda gave her good advice on all occasions; and the Woggle-Bug, who was appointed to the important post of Public Educator, was quite helpful to Ozma when her royal duties grew perplexing.

The girl, in her gratitude to the Gump for its services, offered the creature any reward it might name.

"Then," replied the Gump, "please take me to pieces. I did not wish to be brought to life, and I am greatly ashamed of my conglomerate personality. Once I was a monarch of the forest, as my antlers fully prove; but now, in my present upholstered condition of servitude, I am compelled to fly through the air—my legs being of no use to me whatever. Therefore I beg to be dispersed."

So Ozma ordered the Gump taken apart. The antlered head was again hung over the mantle-piece in the hall, and the sofas were untied and placed in the reception parlors. The broom tail resumed its accustomed duties in the kitchen, and finally, the Scarecrow replaced all the clotheslines and ropes on the pegs from which he had taken them on the eventful day when the Thing was constructed.

You might think that was the end of the Gump; and so it was, as a flying-machine. But the head over the mantle-piece continued to talk whenever it took a notion to do so, and it frequently startled, with its abrupt questions, the people who waited in the hall for an audience with the Queen.

The Saw-Horse, being Ozma's personal property, was tenderly cared for; and often she rode the queer creature along the streets of the Emerald City. She had its wooden legs shod with gold, to keep them from wearing out, and the tinkle of these golden shoes upon the pavement always filled the Queen's subjects with awe as they thought upon this evidence of her magical powers.

"The Wonderful Wizard was never so wonderful as Queen Ozma," the people said to one another, in whispers; "for he claimed to do many things he could not do; whereas our new Queen does many things no one would ever expect her to accomplish."

Jack Pumpkinhead remained with Ozma to the end of his days; and he did not spoil as soon as he had feared, although he always remained as stupid as ever. The Woggle-Bug tried to teach him several arts and sciences; but Jack was so poor a student that any attempt to educate him was soon abandoned.

After Glinda's army had marched back home, and peace was restored to the Emerald City, the Tin Woodman announced his intention to return to his own Kingdom of the Winkies.

"It isn't a very big Kingdom," said he to Ozma, "but for that very reason it is easier to rule; and I have called myself an Emperor because I am an Absolute Monarch, and no one interferes in any way with my conduct of public or personal affairs. When I get home I shall have a new coat of nickel plate; for I have become somewhat marred and scratched lately; and then I shall be glad to have you pay me a visit."

"Thank you," replied Ozma. "Some day I may accept the invitation. But what is to become of the Scarecrow?"

"I shall return with my friend the Tin Woodman," said the stuffed one, seriously. "We have decided never to be parted in the future."

"And I have made the Scarecrow my Royal Treasurer," explained the Tin Woodman. "For it has occurred to me that it is a good thing to have a Royal Treasurer who is made of money. What do you think?"

"I think," said the little Queen, smiling, "that your friend must be the richest man in all the world."

"I am," returned the Scarecrow; "but not on account of my money. For I consider brains far superior to money, in every way. You may have noticed that if one has money without brains, he cannot use it

to advantage; but if one has brains without money, they will enable him to live comfortably to the end of his days."

"At the same time," declared the Tin Woodman, "you must acknowledge that a good heart is a thing that brains can not create, and that money can not buy. Perhaps, after all, it is I who am the richest man in all the world."

"You are both rich, my friends," said Ozma, gently; "and your riches are the only riches worth having—the riches of content!"



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**THE OZ BOOKS**

BY  
**L. FRANK BAUM**

## *The Wizard of Oz*

[Originally published as *The Wonderful Wizard of Oz*]

**I**t is in this book that Oz is "discovered." A little Kansas girl—Dorothy Gale—is carried in her house to Oz when a cyclone whisks it through the sky. As the house lands in the Munchkin Country (one of the four great countries of Oz) it destroys a wicked witch and sends Dorothy off on her first adventure in Oz. She finds the Scarecrow, meets the Tin Woodman and the Cowardly Lion, melts a second wicked witch with a pail of water and finds her way home. Since this book appeared a half-century ago, we have learned many marvelous things about the Land of Oz.

## *The Land of Oz*

[Originally published as *The Marvelous Land of Oz*]

**T**his sequel to *The Wizard of Oz* deals entirely with the early history of Oz. No one from the United States or any other part of the "great outside world" appears in it. It takes its readers on a series of incredible adventures with Tip, a small boy who runs away from old Mombi, the witch, taking with him Jack Pumpkinhead and the wooden Saw-Horse. The Scarecrow is King of the Emerald City until he, Tip, Jack, and the Tin Woodman are forced to flee the royal palace when it is invaded by General Jinjur and her army of rebelling girls. The *Land of Oz* ends with an amazing surprise, and from that moment on Ozma is princess of all Oz.

## *Ozma of Oz*

**F**ew of the Oz books are as crowded with exciting Oz happenings as this one. Not only does it bring Dorothy back to Oz on her second visit, but it introduces Dorothy to Ozma, relates Ozma's first important adventure, and introduces for the first time such famous Oz characters as Tik-Tok, the mechanical man, Billina the hen, the Hungry Tiger, and—*the Nome King*! Most of the adventures in this book take place outside Oz, in the Land of Ev and the Nome Kingdom. Scarcely a page fails to quiver with excitement, magic and adventure.

## *Dorothy and the Wizard in Oz*

**O**f course, everyone always predicted it would happen! And in this book it does—the Wizard comes back to Oz to stay. Best of all, he comes with Dorothy, who is having adventure number three that leads her to Oz, this time via a California earthquake. In this book we meet Dorothy's pink kitten, Eureka, whose manners need adjusting badly, and two good friends who we are sorry did not remain in Oz—Jim the cabhorse, and Zeb, Dorothy's young cousin, who works on a ranch as a hired boy.

## *The Road to Oz*

**W**e like to think of this volume as "The Party Book of Oz." Almost everyone loves a party, and when Ozma has a birthday party with notables from every part of fairyland attending—well! It is just like attending Ozma's party in person. You meet the famous of Oz, and lots of others, such as Queen Zixi of Ix, John Dough, Chick the Cherub, the Queen of Merryland, Para Bruin the rubber bear and—best of all—Santa Claus himself! Of course there are lots of adventures on that famous road to Oz before the party, during which Dorothy, on her way to Oz for the fourth time, meets such heart-



warming characters as the Shaggy Man, Button-Bright, and lovely Polychrome, daughter of the rainbow.

## *The Emerald City of Oz*

**H**ere is a "double" story of Oz. While Dorothy, her Aunt Em and Uncle Henry experience the events that lead to their going to Oz to make their home in the Emerald City, the wicked Nome King is plotting to conquer Oz and enslave its people. Later we go with Dorothy and her friends in the Red Wagon on a grand tour of Oz that is simply packed with excitement and events. While this transpires, we learn also of the Nome King's elaborate preparations to conquer Oz. As Dorothy and her friends return to the Emerald City, the Nome King and his hordes of warriors are about to invade it. How Oz is saved is an ending that will amaze and delight you.

## *The Patchwork Girl of Oz*

**H**ere, the Patchwork Girl is brought to life by Dr. Pipt's magic Powder of Life. From that moment on the action never slows down in this exciting book. It tells of Ojo's quest for the strange ingredients necessary to brew a magic liquid that will release his Unk Nunkie from a spell—the spell cast by the Liquid of Petrification, which has turned him into a marble statue. In addition to the Patchwork Girl, Ojo and Unk Nunkie, this book introduces those famous Oz creatures, the Woozy, and Bungle the glass cat. Oz certainly has become a merrier, happier land since the Patchwork Girl came to life, and this is the book that tells how Scraps came to be made, how she was brought to life, and all about her early adventures.

## *Tik-Tok of Oz*

**F**or the second time a little girl from the United States comes to Oz. Betsy Bobbin is shipwrecked in the Nonestic Ocean with her friend Hank the mule. The two drift to shore in the Rose Kingdom on a fragment of wreckage. Betsy meets the Shaggy Man and accompanies him to the Nome Kingdom, where Shaggy hopes to release his brother, a prisoner of the Nome King. On their way to the Nome Kingdom, one fascinating adventure follows another. They meet Queen Ann Soforth of Oogaboo and her army, and lovely Polychrome, who had lost her rainbow again; they rescue Tik-Tok from a well; and are dropped through a Hollow Tube to the other side of the world where they meet Quox, the dragon. You'll find it one of the most exciting of all the Oz books.

## *The Scarecrow of Oz*

**T**his is the Oz book which L. Frank Baum considered his best. It starts quietly enough with Trot and Cap'n Bill rowing along a shore of the Pacific Ocean to visit one of the many caves near their home on the California coast. Suddenly, a mighty whirlpool engulfs them. The old sailorman and the little girl are miraculously saved and regain consciousness to find themselves in a sea cavern. (To this day, Trot asserts she felt mermaid arms about her during those terrible moments under water.) From here on, one perilous adventure crowds in upon another. In Jinxland they meet the Scarecrow who takes charge of things once Cap'n Bill is transformed into a tiny grasshopper with a wooden leg. An exciting royal reception greets the adventurers upon their return to the Emerald City.

## *Rinkitink in Oz*

**P**rince Inga of Pingaree is the boy hero of this fine story of peril-filled adventure in the islands of the Nonestic Ocean. King Rinkitink provides comic relief, and by the time you reach the final page you will love this fat, jolly little king. Bilbil the goat, with his surly disposition, provides a fine contrast to Rinkitink's merriment and Prince Inga's bravery and courage in the face of danger. Some may say that the three magic pearls are the real heroes of this story, but the pearls would have been of little use to King Kitticut and Queen Garee if Prince Inga hadn't used them wisely and courageously.

## *The Lost Princess of Oz*

**T**alk about *Button-Bright* getting lost—*Ozma* is almost as bad! This is actually the second time *Ozma* has been lost. As you know, once she was "lost" for many years. But in this book she is lost for only a short time. As soon as it is discovered that the ruler of Oz is lost—and with her all the important magical instruments in Oz—search parties, one for each of the four countries of Oz, set out to find her. We follow the adventures of the party headed by Dorothy and the Wizard, who explore unknown parts of the Winkie Country in search of *Ozma*. How *Ozma* is found, and where she has been, will surprise you. Frogman, a new character, is introduced in this book.

## *The Tin Woodman of Oz*

**W**oot the Wanderer causes this chapter of Oz history to transpire. When Woot wanders into the splendid tin castle of Nick Chopper, the Tin Woodman and Emperor of the Winkies, he meets the Scarecrow, who is visiting his old friend. The Tin Woodman tells Woot the story of how he had once been a flesh-and-blood woodman in love with a maiden named Nimmie Aimee. Woot

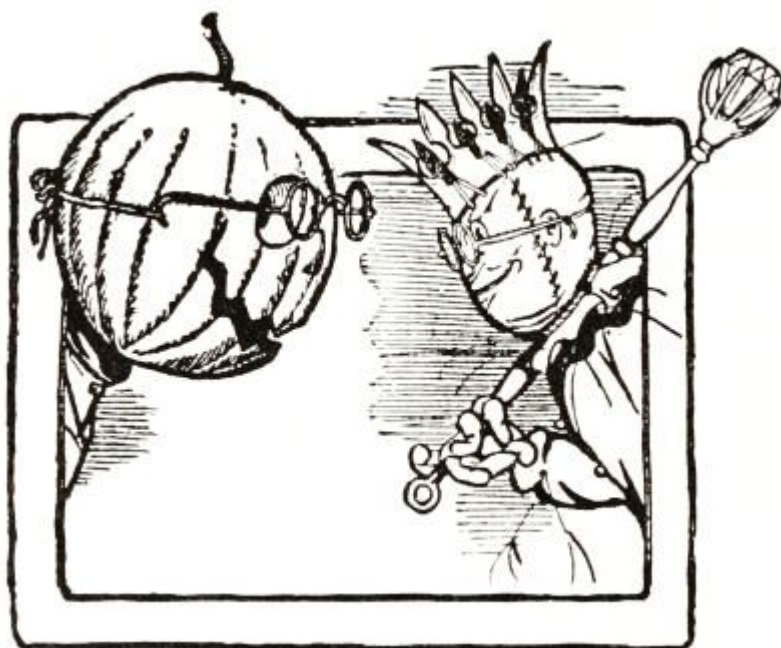
suggests that since the Tin Woodman now has a kind and loving heart, it is his duty to find Nimmie Aimee and make her Empress of the Winkies. The Scarecrow agrees, so the three set off to search for the girl. No less surprising than the adventures encountered on the journey is Nimmie Aimee's reception of her former suitor.

## *The Magic of Oz*

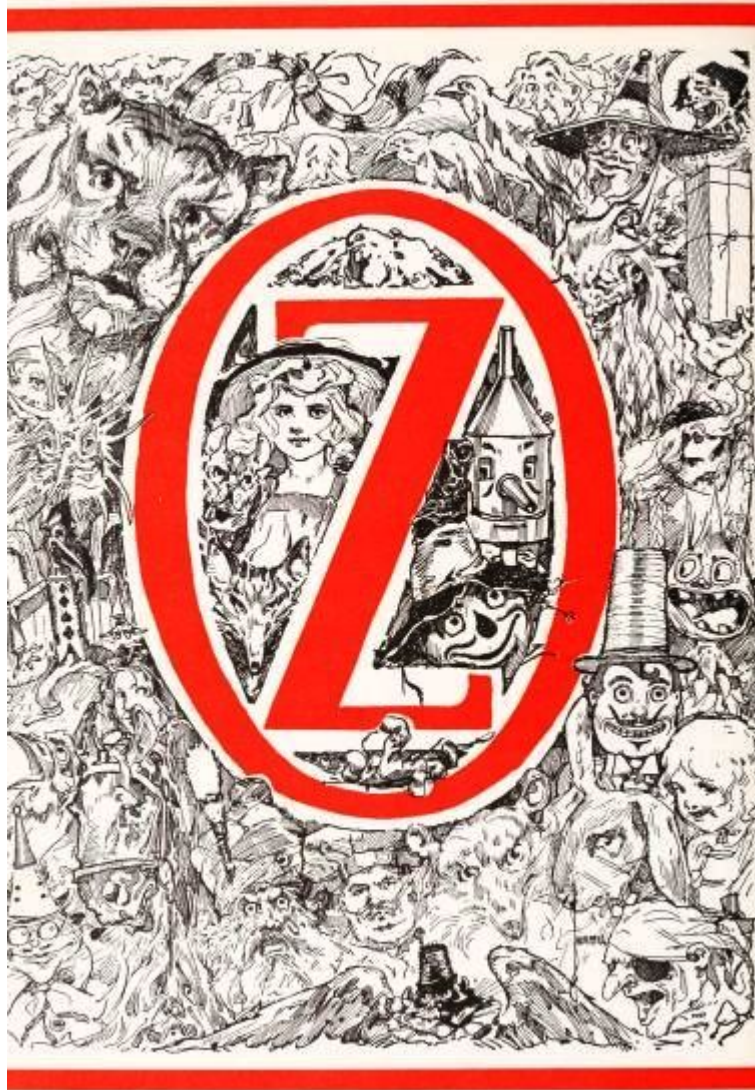
**O**ld Ruggedo, the former Nome King, comes to Oz for the second time, and makes more trouble than he did on his first visit. Ruggedo never gives up the idea of conquering Oz, and this time he has the advantage of being in the country without Ozma's knowledge. Also, he has the magic and somewhat grudging help of Kiki Aru, the Munchkin boy who is illegally practicing the art. If you like magic, then this is a book for you. There's magic on every page, and everyone in the story eventually is transformed into something else, or bewitched in one way or another. Even the wild animals in the great Forest of Gugu do not escape.

## *Glinda of Oz*

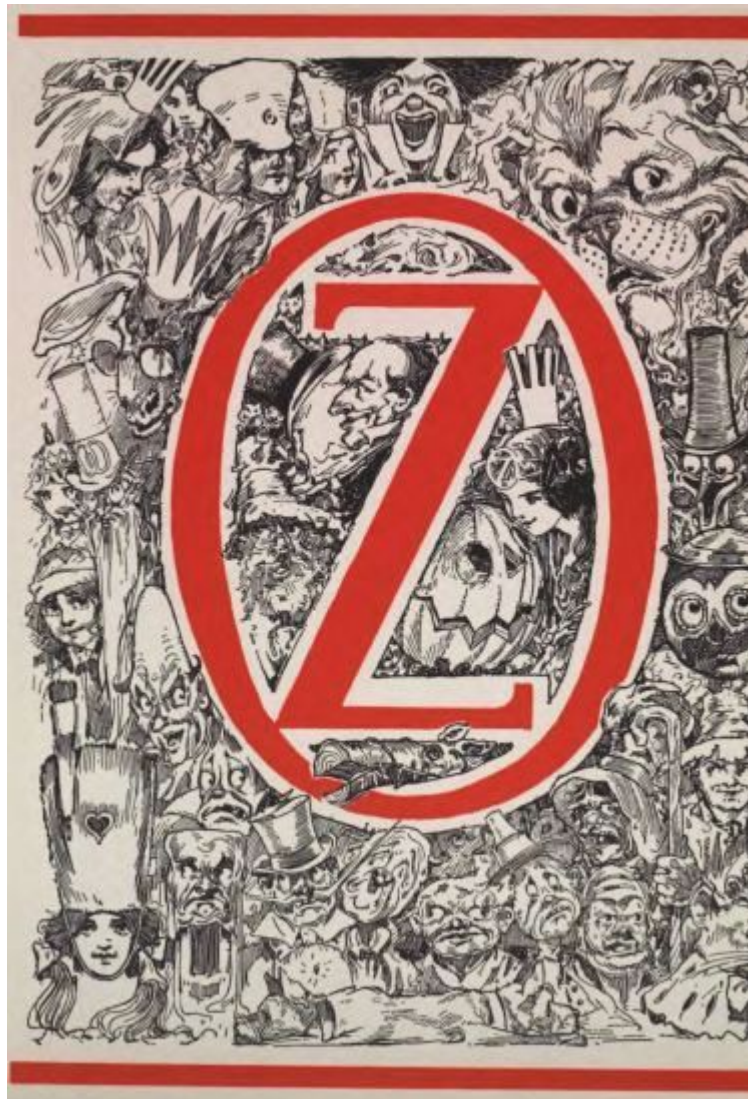
**T**his is the last Oz book written by L. Frank Baum. It is one of the best in the series, with Dorothy, Ozma, and Glinda in an adventure that takes them to an amazing crystal-domed city on an enchanted island. This island is situated in a lake in the Gillikin Country. Ozma and Glinda are confronted by powerful magic and determined enemies. For a time Dorothy and Ozma are prisoners in the crystal-domed city which is able to submerge below the surface of the lake. Few of the Oz books equal this one in suspense and mystery—a story that is truly "out of this world."

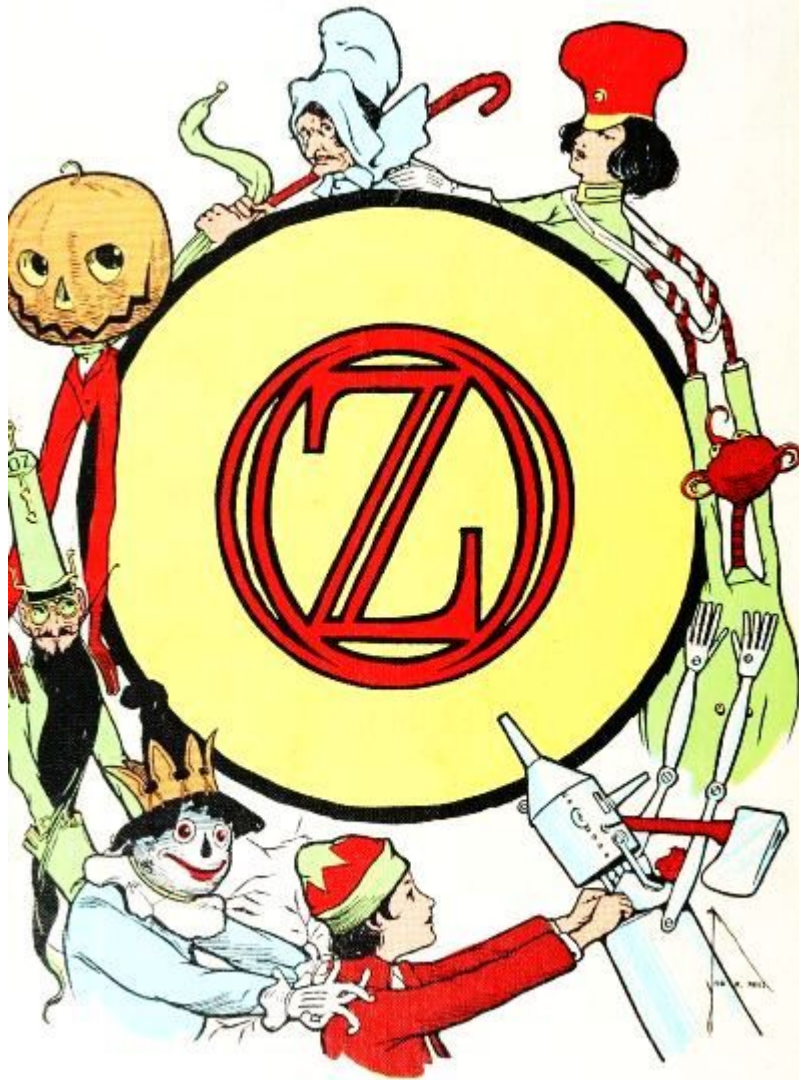


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### Transcriber notes:

P.[6](#). 'ecstasy.' changed to 'ecstasy.'

P.[208](#). 'nickle-plate' changed to 'nickel-plate'

P.[285](#). 'Liquid of Petrefaction' changed to 'Liquid of Petrification'.

Taken hyphen out of pumpkinhead or pumpkinheads.

Fixed various punctuation.



\*\*\* END OF THE PROJECT GUTENBERG EBOOK THE LAND OF OZ  
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